

AMERIMUNC VII

ALBA TCP



A WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL & SIMULATION DIRECTOR

Welcome Delegates!

Our names are Rachel Pederson and Jack Quinn and we will be serving as your Director General and Simulation Director, respectively, for AmeriMUNC VII. We are so excited to welcome you to American University this coming January.

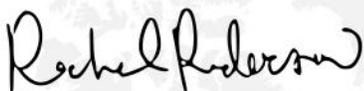
We are so lucky to be working with an extremely skilled staff that is committed to providing a conference that embraces the competitive nature of Model UN, but ultimately creating a realistic simulation for delegates to discuss the world's most pressing issues. Over the past year, AmeriMUNC VII's staff has worked to create background guides, character biographies and more. Together, we have built an engaging and extensive simulation this year. This year's committees consist of General Assembly and Crisis committees. General Assembly will include both regular General Assemblies as well as Specialized General Assemblies. Crisis will take place in the form of government cabinets, boards of directors, government agencies, and independent organizations. With 31 committees, we have never had such a large and varied set of topics to discuss.

This year, our committees are focusing on issues specifically facing Latin America. From cryptocurrency to shark finning, these issues may be specific to the region as a whole or may act as a model for a global situation. Whatever your committee, topic or role, it is important to consider its implications for both your committee as well as the world as a whole.

Unlike any other conference on the high school circuit, all 31 of AmeriMUNC VII's committees are interconnected. This means that actions taken in the Caribbean Community could theoretically impact the course of the Cabinet of the Dominican Republic. While some committees are more impacted by this than others, we have found that running our committee's like this have created a more realistic simulation for delegates.

We cannot wait to welcome you to Washington D.C. in just a few short months. In the meantime, if you have any questions please reach out to either of us or your chairs.

Kindest Regards,



Rachel Pederson

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Jack Quinn

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A NOTE



JOHN FERNANDEZ

Co-Chair

Welcome delegates!

My name is John Fernandez, and I'll be one of your chairs in the ALBA committee! I am a Freshman at the American University School of Public Affairs, majoring in Political Science. I went to high school in Greenwich, CT, but lived all over the United States and Mexico while growing up. I started Model UN in my sophomore year of high school, and quickly became obsessed with the competitive spirited debate it created. Before attending AU, I had competed at conferences across the east coast and Europe, for both Model UN and Model Congress. At AU, I'm involved with the International Relations Society (AMIRS) as well as the School of Public Affairs Leadership Program. I also recently served as a presenter and chair for AMIRS' Washington International Relations Conference. Outside of Model UN, I enjoy staying up to date with current politics, and exploring DC with friends. I'm very much looking forward to chairing your committee, and seeing the creative plans you propose for strengthening ALBA. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions, whether they're regarding the committee, the conference, AU, or anything else! My co-chair and I have worked hard to prepare this committee for you, and we want to create the best experience we can for all delegates. I cannot wait to meet you all, and watch you debate and come to an agreement on the issues facing the ALBA today. Good luck in preparing for your roles in committee, and I hope you find our background guide a useful resource in basing your research.

Thanks,
John Fernandez

A NOTE



LULIA FITIWI
Co-Chair

Hi Delegates!

My name is Lulia Yacob Fitiwi and I will be one of your two chairs in the ALBA committee. Just to tell you a little bit about myself I am a freshman at American University and a member of the club that hosts this conference, The American University International Relations Society (AMIRS) . Throughout my life, I have been fortunate enough to travel and live in many places all over the world. I was born in Asmara, Eritrea but I moved when I was a small child. I have lived in Monrovia, Liberia, California, Milan, Italy and most recently Maryland. Due to constantly moving and the nature of my parent's jobs, I have been exposed to International Relations from a very young age. During my first two years of high school, I attend an American school in Milan in Italy, which is where I found and fell in love with the Model UN during my freshman year. Due to the location of my school, I was able to attend conferences in Dublin, Ireland, and Berlin, Germany. I also had the opportunity to chair a committee at the Bocconi MilanMUN conference. Most recently I was able to serve as a chair and presenter in the Washington International Relations Conference, which is also hosted by AMIRS. Apart from Model UN I enjoy going out with friends, reading or listening to music.

my co-chair and I greatly look forward to meeting all of you. I hope you found the topics of Latin America and ALBA-TCP, as much as we did. Lastly, please do not hesitate to reach out with questions of any kind we are more than willing to help.

Looking forward to see you all,
Lulia Fitiwi



ALBA-TCP

Committee Introduction

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (or ALBA for short) was founded on December 14th, 2004 by President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and Fidel Castro of Cuba as an alternative to the U.S.-led Free Trade Area of the Americas (Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas; ALCA). Put simply, the ALBA can be described as an “integration platform” whose essential purpose is to achieve integral development for areas in Latin America and the Caribbean through a process of integration inspired by the fundamentals demonstrated by Simon Bolivar (where the term “Bolivarian” originates) and Jose Marti. In this sense, ALBA has opened the door to new forms of exchange and communication between countries that were once isolated. In more recent years, ALBA-TCP works to counteract the meddlesome tendencies of capitalism and promote socialist ideals in member states.

The key leaders of the ten member countries—Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela—hold

annual summits to discuss initiatives and strategies for the region. Suriname was admitted to ALBA as a guest country at a February 2012 summit. ALBA’s main goals are to alleviate poverty and to promote socio-economic reform through trade agreements that meet each country’s needs, rather than through the neoliberal, or free-market, economic policies that dominated the region’s economic planning and growth strategies in the 1990s. Key supporters of ALBA found its programs to be worthy alternatives to the economic policies of many international lending organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Critics of ALBA, however, accused it of threatening stability in the region and of disrupting existing alliances, including Mercosur, the Andean Community, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

With this foundation in mind, delegates should focus on new ways to promote and achieve the goals of ALBA, specifically in the areas of poverty, trade, and economic aid among the countries of Latin America and the



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Caribbean. Solutions and creative ideas proposed in this committee may be recommended to higher platforms of the United Nations. The ABLA committee is a body within the General Assembly (GA), which is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority. Decisions on other questions are by simple majority. Each country has one vote.

Topic Overviews

Topic A

The committee is a general meeting of the member nations that make up ALBA-TCP (The Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America. The first topic of this committee is The Expanding Political Power of the Left in Central America. Overall ALBA-TCP represents that growth in power, as its origin stems from Venezuela and Cuba opposing an American led free trade agreement between all the nations of North America, Central America, and South America, with the exception of Cuba which was excluded. This

agreement was the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA). ALBA-TCP was created for the purpose of offering an alternative option to the FTAA. It eventually turned into an alliance that went on to include nations such as Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname with Venezuela and Cuba and founding members. Former members of ALBA-TCP include Ecuador which recently exited in August of 2018 with the announcement by its foreign minister José Valencia. Honduras was also a part of ALBA-TCP when it joined in 2008 but left the organization in 2009 after a coup that ousted the former president Manuel Zelaya.

ALBA-TCP is able to expand its power and influence throughout Latin America through programs such as TeleSUR, PetroCaribe, and SCURE. TeleSUR is a media network that has been nicknamed “the CNN of Latin America.” PetroCaribe is a preferential trade agreement between Venezuela and other nations for the sale of Oil.

SCURE is The Unified System for Regional Compensation. Which is a digital currency that was facilitated by

members of ALBA-TCP. Overall the very existence of ALBA-TCP highlights the growing power of the Left within Latin America.

Topic B

As the world modernizes, the ALBA is constantly looking for new ways to expand its influence, and raise global support. ALBA's power rests in its identity as a united group of nations, and increasing their reputation among the international community would help them to more easily spread their socialist ideals. Within international organizations, the countries of ALBA can work together as a unified bloc, and hold significant leverage in voting power.

ALBA's efforts within the media have already been successful, but lack modernization. The television network TeleSUR has been a valuable tool for the government of Venezuela, and therefore ALBA, to use in spreading their ideology, although occasionally accused of selective reporting and biased coverage. Through TeleSUR, ALBA is able to highlight the political, social, and economic problems in other countries, and promote the positive aspects of the group's left-leaning ideals.

Aside from use of the media, ALBA works to expand their global support through a variety of channels. Foreign allies can be very useful to ALBA, as they enable them to have access to more resources for carrying out their goals. The ALBA, while consisting of multiple South and Central American

countries, has found valuable partnerships with countries such as Iran and Syria. These countries share the ALBA's negative views towards the United States, and the capitalist establishment, helping them significantly in their efforts to establish alternatives to western financial systems, trade alliances, and other core systems of inter-governmental relations. The ALBA hopes to establish a community of nations united behind socialist ideals, and relies on its relationships with foreign countries to stay legitimate.

Key Terms

ALBA-TCP

ALBA-TCP stands for the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America. The organization was created on December 14th 2004 by the former President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez and the former President of Cuba, Fidel Castro. ALBA-TCP started out as an alternative to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Eventually, Venezuela and Cuba were joined by Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname as members of ALBA-TCP.

TeleSUR

TeleSUR is a media network that was created by the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, in 2005. Funding for teleSUR comes from other member nations such as Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia.

SUCRE

SUCRE which is a common reserve fund that was created by members of ALBA-TCP. It was created for the purpose of funding strategies to expand social programs.

Simon Bolivar

Simon Bolivar was a leader for the independence of Latin America from colonial rule in the 19th century. He had a great but unrealized dream of creating a grand state of the Latin American states. Much like a Pan-American Nation.

FTAA

FTAA stands for the Free Trade Area of the Americas. This was a free trade agreement pushed for by the United States for the purpose of creating a free trade area between all the nations of North, Central and South America, with the exception of Cuba. This agreement was seen as largely favorable to bigger and more developed nations such as the United States. The creation of ALBA-TCP was credited for the destruction of the FTAA as it was initially created to serve as an alternative to the FTAA.

OAS

OAS stands for the Organization of American States. According to OAS, it is the world's oldest regional organization that came into creation in 1948 when the charter of the OAS was signed in Bogota, Columbia.

ECOALBA

At an ALBA-TCP summit in February of 2012, ECOALBA was created. ECOALBA is defined by "a shared-development, interdependent, sovereign and supportive economic

zone aimed at consolidating and enlarging a new alternative model of economic relations that will strengthen and diversify the production apparatus and trade exchanges, as well as establishing the bases for the bilateral and multilateral instruments that the Parties may enter into on this matter, with a view to satisfying the physical and spiritual needs of our people."

PetroCaribe

PetroCaribe is one of the ways in which members nations of ALBA-TCP are able to exert and extend their power and influence throughout Latin America. In addition to the member nations of ALBA-TCP, there are also other members of PetroCaribe. These outside members include the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Haiti, and Guatemala. PetroCaribe is run by a Venezuelan oil company named Petr leos de Venezuela (PDVSA). As members of PetroCaribe, the aforementioned nations are able to



receive preferential and favorable agreements when it comes to trade and the sale of oil between the member states and Venezuela.

TOPIC A

Expanding the Political Influence of the Left in South America

History

Since its creation in 2004, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) has worked to promote socialist ideals within and outside of its member states. Inspired by the ideology of Simón Bolívar, the group strives to achieve a united South American continent, free from the economic, social, and political restraints of large capitalist nations. Founded initially by Cuba and Venezuela, the organization has expanded to include a variety of South and Central American, as well as Caribbean nations.

Established in the name of Simón Bolívar, the principles of ALBA reflect much of his ideology. A Venezuelan soldier and army leader in the late 18th and early 19th century, Bolívar successfully freed six South American countries—Bolivia, Columbia, Panama, Ecuador and

Peru—from Spanish rule. Bolívar dreamed of a united South American continent—similar to that of the North American United States. Bolívar achieved partial success, bringing together a significant amount of Central America and Northern South America into a single state known as Gran Colombia—approximately the area of modern Columbia, Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela. While Gran Colombia's success was short lived (dissolving roughly only a decade after its initial founding), the ideology of Simón Bolívar is still relevant and popular for many South Americans. Within South America, Bolívar is colloquially referred to as “El Libertador” or “The Liberator” in English. These titles show Bolívar's revered status and continued cultural significance for the people of South America. Remnants of Bolívar's influence can also be seen in the name of the country Bolivia and the Venezuelan national currency, the Bolívar Soberano. In regards to ALBA,

Simón Bolívar's influence is most strongly noted in ALBA's hope for a politically united South American bloc that would advocate for South American ideals and wield considerable power in the international community.

ALBA as an organization has expanded significantly in both its missions and membership. In order to continue expansion, ALBA utilizes its economic and media influences over Latin American countries to recruit new members. However, ALBA has faced the exiting of at least two major member states. Therefore, in order to stay relevant and meaningful, ALBA has negotiated for ambitious trade deals between its member nations.

Since its founding, ALBA has transformed in both form and scope from a bilateral agreement opposing a trade agreement to the multilateral organization it is today. Originally, ALBA was formed as an agreement between its two founding countries, Cuba and Venezuela, to oppose and serve as an alternative to the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA was a proposed agreement between thirty-four North, Central and South American countries, excluding Cuba, to create an international free-trade zone. However, despite its possible benefits, FTAA was viewed unfavorably by less developed countries who believed, similar to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the FTAA would only benefit bigger and richer countries—specifically the United States—and take advantage of smaller countries. Because NAFTA abolished many tariffs, who would be unable to compete with the cheap products that entered their countries as a result of

the lack of tariffs NAFTA established. Further, the negotiating countries could not agree on furthering the agreement to include certain issues and regulations on trade in services and intellectual property. Issues in negotiating FTAA were further exacerbated by the center-left leaning powers of Brazil, Argentina and other countries who were opposed to the United States in negotiations. By 2005, the FTAA was abandoned with countries opting to make several smaller unilateral and bilateral deals including the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement.

The failure of the FTAA agreement was in large part due to the influence of the South American organizations ALBA—which at the time comprised of only its two founding member countries—and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). These



organizations advocated against the economic integration of North America and South/Central America because of the concern that increased interdependence between the Americas would lead to the United States taking economic advantage of South American countries. Notably, ALBA also called for a political return to the ideals of Bolívar, touting South American unity and independence from Western capitalism through an alternative socialistic society. This message marked a significant shift in ALBA's purpose, expanding it from

simply anti-FTAA to uniting South American countries under socialist ideology.

In order to achieve their doctrine, ALBA has developed programs with the two purposes of improving the quality of life in member states and recruiting new

states to join ALBA or—if recruitment is not viable—adopt leftist political ideals. ALBA's two founders, Cuba and Venezuela, both embrace socialism, having already established programs and policies which maintain their system. ALBA is both an economic partnership and a political organization dedicated to promoting leftist ideals. Through Venezuela's control of the oil supply and other economic factors critical to the prosperity of most member nations, the nations of ALBA are closely economically interconnected.

The organization spreads its influence and socialist ideals on the

international stage. Led usually by Venezuela, the group has challenged American positions in regional bodies such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and international bodies such as the United Nations. This active participation in the politics of the world, with a viewpoint that differs from Western centric capitalism, has attracted support from a variety of nations. While not full members of the organization, ALBA has many observer members who have joined at various times throughout the organization's history including Grenada, Haiti,

Paraguay, and Syria. These nations have goals and ideals that align with the mission of ALBA and work alongside ALBA to promote their common interests. In spreading the influence of the left to Central America, South America, and around the world, ALBA has created a strong voting bloc independent of Western

nations in many regional and international organizations. In order to continue growing their bloc ALBA leverages both its economic power and mass media to entice new members and create allies.

ALBA has historically spread its influence through rendering economic assistance to other nations. By assisting them in their economic affairs, ALBA endears said countries to their cause, making them more likely to advocate for ALBA policies and become more invested in the group as a whole. For example, since agriculture is a significant part of Bolivia's economy, Bolivia faced a major economic challenge in 2006 when the United States ceased purchasing

“...touting
South
American
unity...”

Contra el Imperialismo
UNIDAD
de Nuestra
AMÉRICA



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Bolivian soybeans. ALBA quickly stepped in to assist Bolivia and began importing Bolivian soybeans to other nations in ALBA. ALBA also provided significant non-financial support to Bolivia by assisting them in upgrading their natural gas sector, deploying doctors and teachers to regions in need, and providing assistance to the nation's armed forces. Even apart from their member states, ALBA has been very generous in aiding countries with similar beliefs to help advance their larger socialist agenda. Simple observer states, such as Paraguay and Uruguay have also received significant material support from the organization. Uruguay receives 40,000 barrels of oil per day from ALBA at discounted rates and has also received financing for the expansion of an oil refinery. Paraguay too receives benefits from ALBA having received a pledge of millions of dollars in aid and oil industry professionals to help the nation explore possible oil reserves. ALBA's aid creates rapport

with still developing nations which also causes these countries to be more receptive to the socialist ideology ALBA spreads. This strategy has significantly expanded ALBA's influence and successfully established multiple allies for the organization.

Over the past decade, ALBA has also used mass media to guide people more left leaning. Their primary tool is TeleSUR, an alternative state-sponsored and state-influenced news source. The television network was launched by Hugo Chávez in 2005, and the Boston Globe described TeleSUR as "a Latin socialist answer to CNN." TeleSUR's main purpose is to create an alternative viewpoint of information and media flowing into Latin American countries from Western countries such as the United States. TeleSUR is considered a generally reliable source of information. However, the new organization is overtly biased against the policies of

the United States. TeleSUR, as a Venezuelan institution, has also been accused of biased reporting in its coverage of the Venezuelan elections. Nonetheless, TeleSUR's wide broadcasting reach, counter-hegemonic attitude, and mostly impartial news makes it an incredibly effective tool for the ALBA to spread their influence, and reduce South and Central America's reliance on the United States for media and culture.

Despite its expansion, ALBA has faced issues retaining membership. In March of 2008, Honduras—under then President Manuel Zelaya—joined ALBA to become a member nation. However, President Zelaya was overthrown in a military coup d'état in about a year later in June of 2009. Zelaya's successor, President Roberto Micheletti, decided that Honduras would leave ALBA on January 12th of the following year. Micheletti's decision was ratified by the Congress of Honduras 122 to 128 decision, with only five leftist members of Congress voting to stay in ALBA.

In reaction to Honduras' vote to exit, ALBA took political and economic steps to punish Micheletti for staging a military coup. First, ALBA and its member nations refuse to recognize President Micheletti and his government as legitimate. ALBA then released a resolution stating that the member nations would withdraw their ambassadors from Honduras until President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was reinstated to power. ALBA nations further urged other South American multilateral organizations and the United Nations to withdraw their diplomatic relations from Honduras and to impose sanctions until Zelaya was

reinstated. To add economic pressure, Venezuela put a stop on all of the oil shipments Honduras had been receiving in their deal with PetroCaribe, ALBA's oil alliance, until ALBA's demands were met. They also invoke articles two and three of the Honduran constitution to show support for the president and the Honduran people. President Micheletti remained in power for roughly seven months before losing the presidential election to Porfirio Lobo Sosa. Once President Sosa was inaugurated, most sanctions were lifted.

More recently, Ecuador, another member of ALBA left in August of 2018. This served as a part of a larger disconnect from socialism for Ecuador. In addition to leaving ALBA Ecuador stopped financing TeleSUR, the news, and media company that it previously had a part in. Furthermore, Ecuador also left the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) at that time. This exit from ALBA, UNASUR, and TeleSUR is a move by the then newly elected Lenin Moreno who is more of a political centrist than his predecessor, Rafael Correa, whose policies better aligned with those of ALBA. In the words of Foreign Minister Jose Valencia, "The decision to leave Alba is a firm decision of Ecuador, which seeks to ratify the independence of our country in its general action in regional policy, an action marked in principles."

In the past few years, ALBA has been attempting to broker more trade deals for its member nations. At the recent ALBA-TCP Summit held on the 4th and 5th of February 2012 held in Venezuela, the countries of ALBA created ECOALBA. As defined by

ALBA-TCP, ECOALBA is "a shared-development, interdependent, sovereign and supportive economic zone aimed at consolidating and enlarging a new alternative model of economic relations that will strengthen and diversify the production apparatus and trade exchanges, as well as establishing the bases for the bilateral and multilateral instruments that the Parties may enter into on this matter, with a view to satisfying the physical and spiritual needs of our people." This agreement allowed for two years for the economic zone to be established. Further, ACE N° 70—a Partial Scope Agreement—was signed by Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua to allow ECOALBA to operate. ACE N° 70 went into operation on various days for each country. It was ratified by Nicaragua and Venezuela on the 30th of January 2014, on the 6th of March 2014 for Cuba and on the 5th of February 2015 for Bolivia. Some have hailed this agreement as a source of tariff relief that protects smaller countries. Overall these actions taken by ALBA have been a part of their statement as a whole, as a Bolivarian organization as well as to further the expansion of the power of political left throughout central and Latin America.

Past Actions

As a united bloc of Central and South American countries, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) has implemented policies to advance their Bolivarian goals. The organization's purpose is to provide an alternative to capitalist trade deals and partnerships. ALBA has been able to meet its goal by conducting business outside of the influence of Western

nations. Pioneered by Venezuela and the unitary ideals held by Hugo Chávez, member countries of ALBA enjoy economic, political, and social assistance from other alliance members

Their broad mandate of alliance allows for policies and resolutions to cover nearly any area of governance within member countries. In order to maintain membership, the organization recognizes the diversity of its members and acknowledges its policies are not one-size-fits-all. ALBA respects the sovereignty of each member country. Therefore, while strongly encouraged, ALBA policies are not binding and countries are allowed to decide whether and how to implement ALBA's programs and policies. Cooperation within ALBA has served to benefit many nations working to escape the influence of Western capitalism and create an alternative socialist social and economic system. ALBA is driven by dual mandates: first, decreasing the influence of Western capitalism in South America and the Caribbean and second, creating and spreading an alternate social and economic socialist system.

Because of ALBA's first goal, ALBA stands in opposition to the United State's presence in South American countries. ALBA has encouraged countries to take actions which have resulted in conflict with the United States. The removal of US operatives from South American countries is a clear example of ALBA's ideal of reducing US influence. This action aims to limit the United State's influence in and increase the sovereignty of South and Central American countries.





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In 2009, then President of Ecuador Rafael Correa, ended the United States' decade long lease on a military base in the coastal city of Manta which the United States relied on for aerial monitoring operations and combating drug trafficking, organized crime, human trafficking, and a variety of other foreign-born crimes. Correa, a major supporter of leftist groups in the region including ALBA and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), expelled US troops from both the base and Ecuador. Correa further spearheaded a new constitution which banned foreign military bases throughout Ecuador. This bold act of noncompliance with the United States exemplifies the desire countries of ALBA have to boost their own sovereignty while also feeling a sense of continental unity in their shared rejection of imperialist actions by world powers such as the United States.

Within a year of Ecuador's termination

of the US's lease, Bolivia took a similar action in asserting its independence from United States' control, Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, ended Bolivian cooperation with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and ordered the removal of all DEA personnel working within Bolivian borders. Bolivia and Ecuador bold actions show the strength of ALBA's message and the determination of ALBA members to attain total autonomy from Western powers.

While ALBA exists primarily as an alliance between South American and Caribbean states, as a part of its mission to spread 21st century socialism, ALBA intends to potentially increase membership. Central American nations are in geographical proximity and share Spanish as a common language. Some of these Central American countries have also experienced the ramifications of

Western meddling in their nation's sovereignty. These characteristics make Central American countries ideal candidates for joining ALBA. The organization already boasts a decent roster of Central American countries, including Nicaragua, Honduras (until their exit in 2010), and a variety of Caribbean nations, including one of the group's founders, the Republic of Cuba.

To attract and maintain membership, ALBA has devised and promoted several policies to benefit its member nations. One of ALBA's notable accomplishments is the Higher Education for All (HEFA) policy. Established and pioneered in Venezuela, the policy seeks to guarantee access to higher education for all residents. At the first meeting of the ALBA education ministers, a document known as the Managua Declaration was released, stating, "programs for health, education, and sustainable employment are vital necessities, and fundamental rights critical to the survival and development of the human race." ALBA rejects the traditional idea of education being a commodity, and seeks to provide tertiary education to anyone interested. HEFA has proved incredibly effective in educating the people of ALBA countries, to the point where Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua have all reached levels certified by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as free of illiteracy. The high standard, state-sponsored education is above world averages and serves as an extremely appealing aspect of the ALBA partnership.

HEFA is not only critical in terms of literacy rates and an educated populace but also in spreading the ideals of modern socialism throughout the region. Education within ALBA countries—as provided by HEFA or otherwise—is tailored to instill a sense of moral values based on cooperation and unity instead of Western values of enterprise. This teaching curriculum is a crucial aspect of ALBA's expansion of leftist influence because it works to create and sustain new generations of socialist leaders and supporters.

The rollout of the education system has been highly successful as well with high participation in nearly all ALBA countries. According to the journal of "Globalisation, Societies, and Education," the gross annual higher education enrollment (as a percentage of the 18-22 year old population) in Cuba is 109% enrollment in 2007. Venezuela boasts a lower but still



respectable 52%. This high enrollment percentage shows the effectiveness of ALBA's HEFA policy and the power of its appeal for non-member nations with low higher education enrollment.

In order to expand ALBA's regional influence and attract more members, ALBA controls and distributes its member nations' oil reserves. Energy integration between member states is one of the key factors that facilitates ALBA's unity. It is also another area of ALBA policy where Venezuela shows leadership by supplying its fellow nations with oil. The transport of oil is facilitated through PetroCaribe, an oil alliance run under the Venezuelan oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA). All ALBA countries are members of PetroCaribe, but the organization is not exclusive and includes many other countries reliant on Venezuela for oil. PetroCaribe helps to facilitate the sale of oil to member states and promotes an alternative economic zone that is not controlled by capitalist nations. The organization is designed in part to be an alternative to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an organization of Caribbean states. Like CARICOM, PetroCaribe is designed to benefit the trade of its members by eliminating intermediaries, selling only to state-owned companies approved by PDVSA, and providing incredibly lenient financing with low interest rates and grace periods. However, PetroCaribe is a costly this service, and Venezuela runs a significant deficit. The Venezuelan government's own public records report that preferential oil deals have cost the nation nearly \$20 billion over the last five years. The program does however attracts members with

prospects of cheap oil and the prospects of a non-Western economic partnership.

International markets have historically been dominated by the US dollar because of its stability. In order to conduct financial transactions free of the Western capitalist system, ALBA developed a new currency for intragovernmental transactions. The Unified System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE) is a digital currency with its value floating on a basket of currencies from member countries. To facilitate the distribution of the SUCRE, the Bank of ALBA was created which serves to store member countries' currency reserves and funnel money towards development projects throughout the organization. First introduced in 2010 with a series of governmental transactions between Venezuela and Ecuador, the SUCRE gained reasonably high usage in the years following its release. According to one of the SUCRE's own management reports, the digital currency was used for nearly \$1.1 billion in transactions in 2012.

However transactions using SUCRE have slowed which has led the Venezuelan government to propose a shift to a new currency—the Petro. Petro is a new crypto currency developed by Venezuela which in many ways is similar to the SUCRE except in the source of its value. Instead of a floating basket of currencies, Petro is backed by Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

The development of the Petro has been widely criticized by other countries as a Venezuelan money grab



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designed to skirt US sanctions. The worry from the international community stems from the fact that foreign purchases of the Petro would, in effect, open a line of credit to the Venezuelan government. The Brookings Institution denounced the currency, saying that, “The Petro cannot stabilize the Venezuelan economy and instead exists to create foreign currency reserves from thin air.” For these reasons, Petro has been plagued with problems since its inception.

The past actions of ALBA have all served to strengthen the viability of the organization as an alternative to pacts run by the United States. The non-western reliant economic zone created in the region of ALBA, while not flawless, provides viable options for countries seeking to separate themselves from Western capitalist influences. These actions have helped to maintain and spread the influence of socialism not only in South America but

also the surrounding regions of Central America and the Caribbean. With socialist nations play smaller roles in the larger international community, ALBA is critically invested in spreading its ideology and endearing additional members to its cause.

Case Study

In the 1950’s, a five year revolution occurred in Cuba that drastically changed the scope, priorities, and focus of the country for years to come. Following years of corrupt and dictatorial rule under Cuba’s preexisting president, Fulgencio Batista, a left-wing group known as the 26th of July Movement coordinated violent political unrest that led to the eventual creation of a communist regime. In doing so, the Cuban

revolutionaries employed tactics to spread their ideology as far as possible and recruited like-minded individuals join the movement towards a communist government.

In 1952, Batista, the President of Cuba, realized that he would not win the upcoming election due to allegations of corruption and accusations of dictatorial-style rule which tarnished his presidency. In an attempt to seize power, Batista cancelled the year's elections which attacked the democratic principles of Cuba which angered not only the Cuban populace but also the candidates running for offices. Fidel Castro, who was running for a seat in the Cuban Congress, would likely have won if not for Batista's actions. This cancellation of the elections fueled anger towards the Batista regime which would later transform into the Cuban revolution.

On July 26, 1953, a band of revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro attacked a Cuban barracks building in a relatively isolated part of the country. The group was in dire need of weapons to stand a chance against the Cuban military and intended to steal them from the barracks. They hoped that the element of surprise would be enough to secure their entry into the building and allow them to take the equipment they needed. Upon beginning their raid, however, they were quickly outgunned by the Cuban military, and the band lost most of its men during the raid. Fidel Castro and his brother Raul escaped yet only to be captured by the Cuban military soon after.

The trial of the Castros was a significant turning point in the revolution. On the

stand, Fidel argued that it was his civic duty to fight back against the corruption and tyranny present in the current government. Fidel was sentenced to 15 years in prison, but his eloquent call for revolution made him a nationally recognized figure and gained his movement a significant amount of support. After a brief, almost two years served in prison, the Castros were released due to an increasing amount of international pressure placed on Batista to release political prisoners.

Leaving Cuba for Mexico, the Castro brothers met other like-minded individuals who were exiled from their own countries. These figures included Alberto Bayo—a significant figure in the Spanish civil war—and, most notably, Che Guevara—an Argentine revolutionary who quickly joined up with the Castros' cause. These men, and the others the Castros recruited, called themselves the 26th of July Movement—tribute to the date which Castro's men originally attacked the barracks. This group was formed with the primary purpose of ending the Batista regime. Later, the ideals carried by the 26th of July Movement would eventually result in the creation of a communist state in Cuba. In November of 1956, the Castros, Guevara, as well as many other revolutionaries set sail for Cuba.

With knowledge of the Castros' return to Cuba, the Cuban military ambushed the revolutionaries upon their arrival and killed most of the men the Castros' had brought over from Mexico. The survivors—including the Castros, Guevara, and other individuals critical to the revolution—escaped into the mountains of Cuba where they stayed

for nearly two years. There, the rebels regrouped, trained, and coordinated attacks on military targets in the region. They were able to rally large amounts of support and gain the arms necessary for their eventual revolution. At the same time, other rebel groups, loosely associated with the Castros also conducted revolutionary and violent acts across Cuba. These acts included a 100 man attack on the Domingo Goicuria barracks and a raid on the presidential palace which was nearly successful in assassinating Batista. Meanwhile, the Castros frequently hosted journalists from major media outlets in foreign countries to visit them in the mountains and report on the status of the revolution. These media visits lent major credibility to the Castro's' revolutionary efforts and increased support both domestically and abroad for their cause.

On December 31st, 1958, the revolutionaries began an assault on the city of Santa Clara. They were able to successfully push through the defenses of the Batista military and capture the city. By controlling Santa Clara, the Castros had access to the larger stockpiles of munitions and equipment stored there by the Cuban military. From Santa Clara, the revolutionaries marched on to Havana and quickly seized control of the military and government establishments there. On January 9th of 1959, Fidel Castro arrived in Havana and officially proclaimed the end of his revolution.

Following the revolution, the 26th of July Movement—and the members aligned with it—joined with other revolutionary groups to form the “Organizaciones Revolucionarias

Integradas” (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations or ORI). Two years later, this organization became the “Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba” (United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba), which existed for three years before changing again into the “Partido Comunista de Cuba” (Communist Party of Cuba) which remains in control of the Cuban government to this day.

The Cuban Revolution is significant because it displays how quickly communist and socialist ideals can spread and gain followers. In Cuba, where many felt the democratic system had failed them, it became quite simple for Communist messages spread through propaganda to resonate in the minds of the Cuban people. Throughout the revolution, the rebels conducted many actions to spread their messages across the country, gaining followers and attracting possible recruits.

One such method the Cuban rebels used was a pirate radio station known as “Radio Rebelde.” After the revolution, Fidel Castro reflected that, “Radio Rebelde truly became our means of mass communication, to talk to the people, and it became a much listened to station. It was crucial for disseminating military information and played a key role throughout the war.” This station was founded under the direct supervision of Che Guevara who knew how useful radio could be for clandestine operations after observing the CIA use a pirate radio station as a tool to overthrow the Guatemalan government.

Throughout the war, Radio Rebelde

broadcasted propaganda pieces and news which was increasingly restricted by the Batista government. Radio Rebelde frequently played speeches by and interviews with Fidel Castro along with other significant members of the revolution. The station was also instrumental in coordinating revolutionary acts of protest such as a large workers' strike. Towards the end of the revolution, the station was even used to coordinate military action. Castro goaded his armies to move on the cities of Santiago and Havana via radio broadcast. Radio Rebelde was critical to the ideological efforts of the Cuban Revolution, and helped to unite the people of Cuba under a single left-wing set of ideals.

Another way in which the rebels gained support both within and outside of Cuba's borders was through the strategic use of foreign media. The most influential instance of this tactic took place immediately following Castro's arrival in Cuba by boat. Following the skirmish that killed most of the revolutionaries brought from Mexico, the Batista government falsely announced to the Cuban people that Fidel Castro had been killed. The rebels used this moment as an opportunity to highlight the deceptive and manipulative tendencies of the Batista regime. Instead of immediately declaring he was alive, Castro reached out to major media outlets in the United States and asked for an interview. With a reporter from the New York Times ready to write the story, Castro secretly (as to not let alert Batista) flew to Cuba. On February 24, 1957, the New York Times published a front page article titled "*Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout; Castro Is Still Alive and Still*

Fighting in Mountains." This bombshell article revealed to the Cuban people and the world that Fidel Castro and the revolution were still alive. The article discussed the revolutionaries' intentions in a positive light and ended with a photo of the reporter alongside Castro signed by Castro himself in order to prove the legitimacy of the article's claims. This positive coverage by a major American media outlet attracted significant amounts of attention to the Cuban revolutionaries and reinvigorated their revolution after what seemed to be a brutal defeat at the hands of Batista's military.

The revolutionaries employed intelligent and useful tactics to attract followers and denounce what they believed to be the crimes committed by the Cuban government. The use of Radio Rebelde was a highly effective form of communication and coordination among the grassroots rebel groups. Additionally, the strategic use of the media, whether through the New York Times' interview or the other journalists hosted by the revolutionaries, significantly helped to sway public opinion against the Batista regime and in favor of the revolution. These aspects of the Cuban Revolution are pertinent to the committee's larger issue as the study of this revolution shows how quickly socialist/communist ideals can spread under the right conditions. Further, the revolution shows the effectiveness of grassroots groups and media in both rallying support and coordinating action.

A M E R I M U N C V I I



“Trade is also a powerful tool to unite countries.”



Potential Solutions

When considering next steps for expanding the power of the political left in Central America, one should consider the roles of other regional multilateral organizations and the influence of powerful nations outside of the region. Major South American multilateral organizations include Mercosur, the Andean Community of Nations, and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Both Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations are trading blocs between South American countries. These organizations share the common goals of increasing trade and prosperity between their member nations. For ALBA, these trading blocs align with their interests of both boosting the economic independence from Western nations and the interdependence of South American countries. By opening markets in fellow South American

countries, nations become slightly less dependant on non-regional demand. Trade is also a powerful tool to unite countries. Since the trade between South American countries is an important factor for many of the nations' success, the countries become more reliant on one another. This reliance means countries must remain cordial to keep trade relations and avoid an economic downturn.

UNASUR, while not a trading bloc, has also served as an important organization for promoting South American unity. UNASUR is the default forum for dialogue and diplomatic relations between South American countries. The creation of a formal setting for discussion between nations functions to ease communication between the nations. UNASUR is also meant to build consensus between nations which furthers South American unity.

However, it is important to keep in mind that multilateral organizations can become dominated by a few well-developed countries, subverting the sovereignty of less-developed nations. Within ALBA, Venezuela historically has been the most dominant country, controlling the oil supply member nations rely upon and hosting the headquarters of ALBA operations. Similarly, in UNASUR Brazil plays much of the same role. In terms of economic weight Brazil takes on more than half. According to Victoria Murillo, who teaches at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, "Brazil to UNASUR is like Germany to the EU. Success will depend on member countries' willingness to accept Brazil as a leader." For smaller and less developed nations, the imbalance of economic and political power can distort the relationship between member states from an equal partnership to an exploitable resource for more powerful nations.

Encouraging other Central and Latin American countries to join multilateral organizations other than ALBA may promote ALBA's goals of Latin American unity, economic independence from Western nations, and power on an international stage through a large Latin American voting bloc. Still, it is important to keep in mind the interests of smaller nations whose sovereignty must be respected to continue the viability of large multilateral organizations.

As ALBA's influence in Latin America expands, hostile relations with the United States grow. The current political crisis in Venezuela, one of the leading actors in ALBA, has left

Venezuela isolated from certain parts of the world as their current president is not recognized by many Latin American countries as well as the United States. This includes total economic sanctions that were imposed by the United States on Venezuela in August of 2019.

Something else to consider is interactions and the role that other nations outside of the region such as China and Russia play, as well as the support they can provide when relations with North America of the West is not at the current best.



TOPIC B

Increasing Global Support for ALBA

History

Over the past decade and a half, ALBA (The Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our Americas) has determinately pursued its goal of expanding its support among both the general population and from other nations. In order to achieve this goal, ALBA has used state sponsored media, specifically teleSUR, to garnish support for itself. Yet concerns over teleSUR's reliability has somewhat clouded its effectiveness. As ALBA increases its reach on the world stage, Western countries—which is generally opposed to ALBA—are choosing to respond in differing ways. Most interestingly, ALBA's mission of independence from Western influence has created unlikely alliances which can be analyzed through ALBA's three observer states.

When considering the media and their interaction with ALBA, it is necessary to

understand teleSUR—nicknamed as “the CNN of Latin America.” In Spanish, teleSUR is known as La Nueva Televisora del Sur which translates to “The New Television Station of the South.” On the surface, teleSUR is a normal television network which provides reliable news reporting. Translated from the teleSUR website, “teleSUR has always been breaking the news on big events, not only in Latin America but around the world. For the last nine years, we have been covering important news and information, reporting the truth internationally.” However, teleSUR's ulterior motive is to furthering ALBA's goals of Latin American unification and independence from Western influence, including capitalism. Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC), an online website dedicated to checking political bias and providing factual accuracy, has rated teleSUR's factual reporting as “Mixed” and their political bias between “Left” and “Left-Center.” For context, Fox

News has also been given a “Mixed” rating for factual reporting while MSNBC is rated solidly “Left” in political bias. TeleSUR’s propagandist tendencies are revealed through teleSUR’s origins, official statements and funding sources.

TeleSUR was established in 2005 with its first airing taking place in the Teresa Carreño Theater of Caracas, Venezuela on July 24th. Uncoincidentally, teleSUR’s initial air date was also Simón Bolívar’s 222nd birthday. TeleSUR’s initial advisory board and mission statement also show teleSUR’s propagandist leaning. The advisory board included prominent Hispanic such as Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, a Nobel Peace Prize Winner and human rights activist, and Ignacio Ramonet, a well respected journalist and editor. In 1987, Esquivel called for greater Latin American independence, a reexamination of the relationship between Latin American and the United States, and the possible exploration of more socialistic forms of economics in his lecture titled “Peace and Justice in Central and Latin America.” Similarly, Ramonet is closely associated socialism as the only writer Castro officially approved of to write Castro’s biography.

These values of independence and unification are further reflected in teleSUR’s official mission and vision statements. For example, teleSUR’s mission is to create “a Latin American multimedia platform oriented to lead and promote the unification of the people of the South. We are a space and a voice for the construction of a new communications order” while their vision as an organization is “being a multimedia public service platform with

global coverage and that produces and disseminates information from the south for a broad base of loyal users, with people at the center of their view. The “South” as defined by Venezuela is the “Geopolitical concept that promotes the struggle of peoples for peace, self-determination, respect for Human Rights and Social Justice.” From this definition of the South, Venezuela again shows its ambition to create a region unified by not only geographically but also political proximity.

TeleSUR is funded and sponsored by ALBA member nations, including Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia, and teleSUR’s headquarters are located in the capital of Venezuela, Caracas. In an Al Jazeera article titled “Tuning in to teleSUR’s agenda,” the author further explores teleSUR’s funding, “ask Telesur who funds the channel today and the story



gets murky - which only goes to reinforce the notion that Telesur is TeleChávez in disguise.” Overall, while teleSUR may present as an objective news source, its sponsorship and origins reveal a bias.

While teleSUR does have a reported bias towards ALBA’s ideals, teleSUR is still an important new source because it is a South American news organization dedicated to catering to South American people. However, questions of teleSUR’s legitimacy as a reliable news source continue to plague the

company. In the Al Jazeera article, “Tuning in to teleSUR’s agenda,” the writer states that some audiences view teleSUR as a “pioneering and much needed media voice.” TeleSUR fills a content gap for Latin American audiences. The article states that teleSUR

provides “extensive coverage of social movements, around Latin America and beyond; round table discussions on the Western world’s financial crisis; documentaries highlighting the plight of the continent’s indigenous peoples.” This content is desirable for Latin American audiences because it specifically addresses topics they are interested in and affect them regularly. Generally, these Latin American focused stories are overlooked by the western centric media produced in the United States. A quote by Francisco Dominguez, the head of the Center for Latin American Studies at Middlesex University, featured in the

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 continue to
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Al Jazeera article reads, “The motto of Telesur itself is ‘our north is the south’. That is to say that the objective is to tell the south about the south, by the south itself. It’s something that’s never been done in the past.” TeleSUR plays an important role in validating Latin American people by giving them a platform to hear stories about themselves through their own cultural lens and perspective.

From the perspective of the United States, the use of teleSUR by Venezuela (and ALBA in general) is potentially dangerous because it may stir up anti-US sentiment in Latin America which could threaten US power. In an article published in the Miami Herald Representative Joe Wilson, a Republican from South Carolina, was quoted as asking the Justice Department of the United

States to investigate whether or not teleSUR is an “unregistered agent of the Nicolás Maduro regime in Venezuela.” Moreover, in his letter to the then Secretary of Justice Jeff Sessions, Wilson wrote “as the Administration continues to help the people of Venezuela take back their country from authoritarian dictators, I am writing to request the Administration help the people of the United States by investigating the status of Telesur under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.” When asked about his reasoning for calling for an investigation into teleSUR, Wilson said that teleSUR “appear[ed] to act under foreign direction and engages in political activities in the interest of its foreign principal, primarily the



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government of Venezuela.” Wilson’s statements are reflective of a larger fear shared by many in the United States that teleSur undermines the interests of the United States in Latin America.

However, not all western countries are hostile or wary of ALBA. For example, French 2017 presidential candidate, Jean Luc Melenchon, proposed in an interview on Wednesday, April 12th, 2017 that if he would support French Guiana and French West Indies joining ALBA were he to win the French presidential election. In chapter 62 of Melenchon’s proposal for his presidency, he writes to “establish a co-development policy with Latin America and the Caribbean by joining the ALBA.” He then points out the similarity of his plan with previous actions of France. These actions include France’s participation in the Association of Caribbean States which includes members of ALBA such as

Cuba and Venezuela.

Further global support ALBA can be found in ALBA’s three observer states include: Haiti, Iran, and Syria. These nations are allowed to participate in ALBA programs and attend certain summits, but they are ultimately unable to vote or propose language for resolutions or communiqués. Through these relationships between ALBA and its observer states, ALBA’s drive to gain votes for its bloc—and therefore increase its worldwide power—is apparent. Haiti’s alliance with ALBA shows the economic incentives of being associated with ALBA. Haiti has been a permanent observing member of ALBA since 2007, and recent discussions at ALBA summits have included consideration of changing Haiti’s status within ALBA to full-fledged member. Haiti, as a permanent observing member, is also allowed access to ALBA’s economic programs such as PetroCaribe and

ECOALBA. These programs benefit Haiti by giving providing preferential oil prices and an economic trade zone. These benefits are useful for Haiti's continued economic development. In November of 2012, then Haitian president Michel Martelly stated in a teleSUR interview that "We plan to strengthen our position at the level of ALBA [...] now [that] we have an observer position we want to strengthen it." Haiti's relation to ALBA shows how ALBA uses its economic power to influence countries to join its voting bloc.

The relationship between Iran and ALBA shows how ALBA's opposition to the United States has created interesting alliances. According to Vincent Lofaso, a writer for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Iran's expanding influence in Latin American countries can be most obviously observed through Iran's opening of multiple embassies, cultural centers and mosques. More covertly, Iran has also expanded its intelligence operations based in Latin America. According to a Wall Street Journal article, "Peru's southern rural communities are typical targets for launching networks. Front companies in the beef and oil industries in Brazil and Uruguay are used to provide cover for Iranian operatives." Through both these open and covert actions, Iran has advanced its influence in South America without actually being a full member of ALBA with voting rights.

Lofaso further writes that the relationship between Iran and Venezuela within ALBA is an alliance of both ideological and economic interdependence. Both Iran and

Venezuela have common anti-western sentiment which specifically manifests in non-friendly relationships with western nations, specifically the United States. This convergence of interests is foundational to the relationship between not only Iran and Venezuela but also ALBA as a whole. Lufaso writes, "When the Western sanctions were placed on Iran, the Bolivarian Alliance opposed the sanctions because it felt that Iran helped a number of nations economically by increasing foreign investment, reducing inflation, and bringing in more natural resources for sustainable development." As Latin American nations work to step out of the shadow of the United States, they are developing foreign policies and alliances that refuse to be controlled by the approval of the United States.

The relationship between Iran and Venezuela is also partially due to the fact that both nations are members of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. In the 1970s, OPEC sanctioned the sale of oil to countries, including the United States, that supported Israel and its military in the Yom Kippur War. Iran and Venezuela have worked together in the past including the \$4 billion Ayacucho oil field joint project, which is a joint oil project in the east center Venezuela. Another example of Venezuelan and Iranian cooperation is Venezuela's agreement in 2009 to invest \$760 million in Iran's South Pars gas field. The next year in 2010, Venezuela offered another \$800 million investment package to Iran to also be invested in the South Pars field. These interactions between Venezuela and Iran show that the two countries align

not only in foreign policy but also work well together economically.

ALBA's relationship with Syria, the third observer state within ALBA, displays the controversy ALBA is willing to ignore in order to gain good relations and oppose the West. In addition to being an observing member of ALBA, Syria—more specifically Bashar al-Assad—also enjoyed support from the Bloc of ALBA nations in regards to the civil and military incursion into Syria. Bashar al-Assad is the current president of Syria. In 2011, amid many political protests and violent military shutdowns of these protests, many nations called for al-Assad to step down from his presidency, and the international community openly discusses sending a military intervention to stop the violence within Syria. ALBA, however, officially denounced the idea of intervention in a statement announced by ALBA's Foreign ministers as a result of ALBA's 4th political council meeting the capital of Venezuela Caracas which took place on September 10, 2011. According to an article by the Day Press News, ALBA “expressed their deep concern over NATO campaign in Libya as an unprecedented dangerous intervention, warning against launching a similar campaign in Syria.” Further, in the communiqué “Alba ratifica s apoyo a Siria” (as translated by Yoshie Furuhashi) released at the end of the eleventh ALBA summit meeting, ALBA stated that the “acts of armed violence ... unleashed against the Syrian people” were “supported by foreign powers” which essentially shifts the blame of violent responses to protests from the Syrian military (and president) to other countries. In this same communiqué, the member nations of ALBA

“reiterate[d] their support for the policy of reforms and national dialogue promoted by the government of President Bashar al Assad.” ALBA's continued support of Syria's government—despite concerns about its human rights—shows ALBA's resolve to gain the votes of other nations and its drive to create an alternative community to the one dominated by the West and specifically the United States.

Past Actions

Increasing global support continues to be a major priority for ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas). With the dawn of the digital age, ALBA's usage of media and cultural diplomacy has reflected their goal with success in both South America and worldwide. As ALBA relies on popular support for their idealized form of government and economics, it is critical for them to have reliable ways to get their messages out, express their ideas, and gain global support. In the past, ALBA has devised various plans to increase their global support, using the resources available to them. While these plans have had varying degrees of success, they show ALBA's desire to expand.

The most obvious part of ALBA's media campaign is the television network teleSUR . The network—sponsored primarily by Venezuela—works to peacefully promote ALBA ideals throughout South America. TeleSUR is frequently criticized for varying levels of political bias in its reporting, usually relating to matters involving the Venezuelan government. Many have





said that TeleSUR's coverage exclusively focuses on whether to report information that may be beneficial or harmful to that nation regarding that nation based on their political alignment and relationship with ALBA or Venezuela. TeleSUR is a free-to-air satellite network, allowing anybody within satellite range to access and view the network. Because teleSUR is both free and uses satellite to broadcast, teleSUR has a rather expansive reach and reliably broadcasts across much of South America.

ALBA uses teleSUR to both subtly and overtly increase their global support in the general population. TeleSUR is to Venezuela as Al Jazeera is to the State of Qatar or CCTV to China. These state-sponsored networks, while running independently from their sponsoring governments, still espouse many of the same views as their sponsoring governments. Through

teleSUR, ALBA highlights the economic, social, and political issues in other countries in order to promote ALBA's reformed socialist way of life. TeleSUR also adds a great deal of legitimacy to ALBA because the news organization feeds the general population with information which supports ALBA.

TeleSUR is, however, not an ideal source of media. During its inception, the goal of the channel was to create a unified network for Latin Americans, yet teleSUR is dominated by the Venezuelan perspective. The founder of the network—Aram Aharonian—resigned in 2013, explaining that, “[TeleSUR] did not achieve latin-americanization and continued to be Venezuelan.” Aharonian's resignation significantly hurt the reputation of the network on a global scale and reinforced the claim that teleSUR's programming is not news but simply propaganda for

Venezuela. If TeleSUR were to undergo reform and leave its strictly pro-Venezuela bias for a more general, pro-socialism editorial view, it may have more success attracting attention internationally.

Another more controversial method ALBA has used to increase support in Latin America is through their use of ALBA houses. “ALBA house” is colloquial term for what is essentially an office of the ALBA organization. These houses exist across Central and South America in both member and non-ALBA member countries. The stated official purpose of these offices is to facilitate the operation of ALBA’s social, economic, and humanitarian efforts. The President of the ALBA house in Caracas stated the purpose of ALBA houses is to “serve as centers for creativity, artists, cultural promoters, social movements - to generate a movement that allows the knowledge of values that at times are not recognized because the mechanisms of the market are not interested in them.” For example, ALBA houses in Peru—a country which is not a member of ALBA—coordinate ALBA’s “Miracle Mission” where individuals with critical eye conditions can be receive necessary medical treatment at a joint Venezuelan-Cuban facility in Copacabana, Bolivia. In its first two years of operation, the program had tested 43,000 people, and sent off another 15,000 for life-saving surgery. As of 2019, Miracle Mission has returned the eyesight of over five million people and provided over 41 million pairs of glasses to mainly low-income people free of charge. ALBA houses have also been critical in the rollout of the Cuban-led “Yo Si

Puedo” (Yes I Can) literacy program which, along with similar ALBA programs, has had great success in educating the people of ALBA countries.

However, the presence of ALBA houses in foreign countries are not solely for positive, beneficial aid. ALBA’s offices in other nations are critical strategic centers for the spread of ALBA’s influence through clandestine methods. A leaked U.S. intelligence communiqué quoted the director of Peru’s ALBA houses saying that he wanted to establish “an axis of Bolivarianism” in Peru. The sentiments of the director show the general approach of ALBA towards these offices. While they are seemingly there to provide aid, and facilitate ALBA’s programs, the sheer number of them across South America shows that there is a deeper purpose. With a large number of these houses located in Peru, the Peruvian Congress opened



an investigation into Venezuelan influence through ALBA houses. While no action was taken against the houses, whether for diplomatic reasons, or lack of proper legal evidence, the Peruvian Congressman in charge of the investigation accused two ALBA houses of providing paramilitary training efforts to interested individuals. The investigation also accused multiple ALBA houses of organizing anti-government protests and coordinating violent actions at such events.

The survival of ALBA as a socialist movement and alternative political/economic area to the United States is reliant on the support of other nations, both nearby and abroad. ALBA is constantly looking to expand and frequently admits new members and observer states. In the spirit of Simón Bolívar, Hugo Chávez—one of the original founders of ALBA—has invited all South and Central American nations to join ALBA. As an organization with openly oppositional to the United States, ALBA has garnered attention from nations that generally stand on the fringe of the international community.

The most notable of these countries is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which holds a very close relationship with ALBA. Venezuelan-Iranian relations began in the 1960s as both countries were co-founders of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The relationship between Iran and ALBA nations has been fruitful for both parties, and Iran provides a significant deal of aid to maintain its positive relationship with Venezuela. Among other forms of assistance, the Islamic Republic has also pledged funds

towards a refinery in Ecuador, a seaport in Nicaragua, and has given hundreds of millions of dollars in loans to Bolivia. In exchange for its aid, Iran has a strategically friendly relationship with countries in close proximity to the United States. In Caracas, Venezuela, Iran has also created the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo (International Bank of Development) which has established mutually beneficial relations with Panamanian banks and access to the United States financial system. While ALBA has not released an official public statement that supports Iran's efforts to use their nations as channels to avoid US sanctions, at an ALBA press conference held in Tehran, the group of Bolivarian states claimed they were confident that, "Iran can give a crushing response to the threats and sanctions imposed by the West and imperialism." ALBA's support for Iran shows ALBA's staunch opposition to the status quo imposed by the United States.

The close relationship between ALBA and Iran has caused some worry for the international community. One of the largest concerns, particularly for the United States, is Iran's investment in the development of paramilitary infrastructure in South America. For example, the Islamic Republic provided seed money and administrative assistance towards the establishment of ALBA's "Regional Defense School" which is located in eastern Bolivia. Iran has kept close ties with the institution. In 2011, Iran sent its Minister of Defense to preside over the school's inauguration and has continued to maintain an active role in the training and indoctrination programs of the facility.



Another concern held about the Iranian relationship with ALBA is due to credible reports that Iran has provided significant material assistance to the intelligence services of the nations within ALBA. This assistance includes training for the intelligence officers of ALBA nations and equipment from Iran. Because of this aid, the presence of the Iranian armed forces has increased dramatically in ALBA nations which has raised new concerns for the international community about the possible involvement of groups aligned with the Iranian armed forces such as Hezbollah.

Overall, ALBA's efforts to increase their media presence and global support have generally been successful. TeleSUR functions as an effective source of propaganda distribution among South American states, and the program of ALBA houses around South America has helped the group to expand their influence through both

legitimate and illegitimate ways. The basic purpose of ALBA, as being a regional alternative to the institutions and policies of the capitalist west is in itself a major advertising point for the group and has attracted the support of nations who have historically been at odds with the United States, such as Iran and Syria (two observer states of ALBA). While ALBA's goals and ideals may not be popular enough to gain steam with the general international community, they are certainly adequate enough to attract attention from major global powers, significantly increase the opportunities and capabilities of the Bolivarian alliance.

“Nearly all forms of media in Cuba are state-sponsored.”



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Case Study

Previously in this section of the Background Guide the role of ALBA's internally created media outlet, teleSur, was discussed. TeleSur and its history was briefly outlined. What was also mentioned in this section is the claims of promoting the values and interests of Latin American nations that teleSur has previously said. These claims have been in direct contradiction with the claims of other news and media agencies. These are claims of lack of factual ratings, questioning the true goal and agenda of teleSur as a news source and the effect that its source of funding has on its effective and accurateness. Furthermore, there has also been a great deal of accusations on the grounds of teleSur being used as a tool by, Hugo Chávez the former president of Venezuela, as a means

and method to further his agenda all across Latin America. This section of the background guide will look more closely into TeleSur, more specifically its portrayal of Cuba and Venezuela, both founding members of ALBA and major funders for teleSur. In addition, the portrayal of these two countries in their own internal media, found in the respective nations will also be discussed. Finally, the portrayal of Cuba and Venezuela by external and international media will be analyzed. This is all for the purpose of understanding the role that media plays in the way ALBA is perceived both in Latin America and Internationally.

Cuba in its treatment of its internal media has been described by a United States-based NGO named Freedom House as “ the most repressive media environment in the Americas.” Nearly all of the traditional forms of media in Cuba are state-sponsored.

Journalists who criticize the government face harassment and detention. Furthermore, according to Freedom House, the only access that most Cubans have to the world wide web is “a closely monitored Cuban internet.” Additionally according to Reporters Without Borders, the access to the internet is so limited that even “the sale of computer equipment is strictly regulated” and that the indictment of most of the journalists imprisoned in March 2003 contained references to their internet activities. Though this information is from 2002, internet access is still severely limited as of 2016. All internet service is controlled and provided by state-owned internet and communications companies, such as Etecsa. However, access to social media has been allowed despite opposition websites being blocked. And despite the fact that the price to access the internet has been lowered to \$2.25, that is still much too high a price to pay for many Cubans. The height of this regulation is demonstrated by the “Paquete Semanal”, which is a selection of materials that are offline and brings the latest of pop-culture and news that is hand-delivered to people through hard and flash drives. Format of media is what is keeping the youth of Cuba in the state of no internet that they live in. The Returning to traditional media, there is the Granma, which is a community party newspaper that is run by the government, the Granma is also available online and regularly reports on ALBA and whatever actions and announcements it carries out. In addition to the Granma is the Juventud Rebelde which is another newspaper run by the Union of Young Communists, this is also available online. Television

in Cuba is also state-run; including Cubavision and Portal de la TV Cubana, which is a state-run TV portal. Because of the strong control that the Cuban government has on the media almost any form of media that comes across Cuba is flattering and favorable towards the government.

“Journalists who criticize the government face harassment and detention.”

Going beyond Cuba’s internal media the Cuban government also received favorable coverage from TeleSur. Examples of this come from the various articles regarding Cuba that TeleSur has recently written. Some of these articles include one from October 15th of this year discussing new economic measures announced by Cuba. The article highlights all the benefits of these new measures while stating that the embargo put in place by the United States to be an “illegal economic and financial blockade imposed by the United States for over 50 years.” Another example of this favorable coverage can be found in an article with the headline: United States Forbid Flights to Cuba Destinations except for Havana. The article highlights statements made by the General Director for the United States that the ban is a form of imperialism to “punish the unshakable rebellion of Cuba.” Similarly, an article on the same topic in the New York Times states that the ban was for the purpose of punishing Cuba



for its support of the Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. To further highlight the difference between favorable treatments that Cuba received from its own state-run media to the way that Cuba is seen and portrayed by the international media is an article in the Guardian. This article talks about the state-sponsored Cuban program to lease out doctors throughout the world, to bring on money to the underdeveloped Cuban economy. While the articles talk about the voluntary aspect of the program and the benefits it provides to the areas and countries they serve, it also discusses the exploitative nature of the program, something that would never happen within Cuba. So to summarize the media attention and coverage that the Cuban government receives internal is only favorable due to the state control of the media. Whereas international media although somewhat critical of the Cuban government still portrays accurate and relatively

impartial information regarding the United States' relationship with Cuba.

Similar to Cuba the level of access to news and media that Venezuela and its citizens received has been heavily limited since 2014 when its current president Nicolas Maduro came to power. Much of its television is state-run and any independent media, whether its television or radio stations are restricted from covering the humanitarian crisis currently ongoing in Venezuela. Freedom House has also rated the usability and freedom of Venezuela's internet services and recently dropped from partly free to not free highlighting the change in Venezuelan society in addition to the humanitarian crisis. The main reason for the regime to limit and censor the media is to suppress all and current opposition throughout Venezuela, the internet is the main way that opposition groups spread information in Venezuela. The biggest example of this



© Carlos Garcia Rawlins/Reuters

is when Gaudio, Maduro's biggest opposition lives stream a speech as forms of social media that it is available on goes down and immediately stops working. Additionally, the Venezuelan government cites the United States' involvement in an attack to take down the electric grid, all while not providing any evidence to back this claim. Going further, according to an article in the Washington Post dated January 31st of 2019 President Maduro's regime has arrested journalists in an attempt to silence the opposition and maintain his grip on power. After protests from international bodies such as the European Union, the journalists were released and eventually slated for deportation. Despite this treatment of journalists from Venezuela, it is still a stark difference from Cuba where little to no media and journalistic opposition exist.

Nevertheless, the media coverage that Venezuela receives from TeleSur which

was created by the current president's predecessor Hugo Chávez is highly favorable to the point where its have been accused by other news organizations and agencies as a perpetrator of propaganda. TeleSur enjoys its largest audience among state sponsored media and television, as reported by Forbes magazine. According to Media Bias/Fact Check This positive media coverage includes headlines supporting Maduro's anti-Gaudio campaign such as "Venezuela Captures Paramilitary Photographed with Gaudio" and "Venezuelan Government Reveals New Evidence Against Guaido" and "Venezuela: Maduro to Present New Evidence Against Conspirators."

International coverage of Venezuela is far less favorable and the main consists of covering the ongoing humanitarian crisis. An Example of this is an article that appeared in Forbes Magazine discussing the level of debt Venezuela

was in. according to the article “Venezuela’s human-made economic calamity just took a turn for the worse. The country’s national debt is now almost double the level of the GDP. At the end of the second quarter, total borrowing hit 198.4% of GDP, up from 102.8% a year earlier, according to a recent report from the Washington D.C.-based think tank, the Institute of International Finance.” Based on historic actions reporting such as this would generally not be allowed in Venezuela and would most likely be restricted by the government. Overall all as founding members of ALBA-TCP, Cuba, and Venezuela have similar policies in all aspects of their governance this includes Media coverage. Despite this, there are still some differences including what is limited. In Cuba, there is nearly no access to non-government approved media whereas in Venezuela there is the presence of non-government sponsored media access to and creating it is dangerous. Another similarity they do enjoy is the way they are represented in the International media.

Potential Future Actions

Moving into the future, there is much that the nations of ALBA can do to increase the public reputation of their media and gain global support. In devising policy and resolutions, it is critical to keep in mind the socialistic and unitary ideals of the Bolivarian alliance. Being that no specific ALBA country would have a tremendous amount of international power on its own, the alliance is intended to unify like-minded nations in Central and South America in order to create

influence as a combined front. In order to increase their power on the international stage, it is critical that ALBA continues increasing its membership in the organization.

A possible way of gaining more support is through ALBA’s television network, TeleSUR, which could also be expanded to reach a broader audience to more effectively spread pro-ALBA and socialist propaganda. The channel is broadcasted already has a reasonably large following in non-ALBA nations. If further invested in, teleSUR could sway international popular opinion (and possibly governmental opinions) in favor of ALBA and open a wide range of possibilities for the expansion of ALBA influence. However, it is also important to recognize teleSUR’s negative reputation as a television network of Venezuelan propaganda. If ALBA’s ideals are too overt in teleSUR programming, teleSUR may lose its remaining credibility and become ineffective. Therefore, while espousing the ideals of the ALBA nations, efforts must also be made to improve teleSUR’s reputation.

ALBA’s strength lies in the fact that it is a union of diverse independent states. Because of its size, ALBA is a powerful voting bloc in the international community, specifically in the United Nations. Because ALBA nations vote together, any proposed policy by an ALBA country automatically has a significant amount of weight because that policy generally has the support and vote of the other ALBA countries.

In order to continue expanding their influence, ALBA has created alliances with nations outside of Central and



Southern America. These non-regional alliances are generally based on shared resentment for the capitalistic philosophy of the West. These partnerships may prove beneficial in furthering development within ALBA nations and opposing US government through assisting nations such as Iran in their efforts to evade US sanctions. Continuing and growing these non-traditional alliances would help the Bolivarian alliance receive recognition as a legitimate alternative to the political and economic institutions of the United States. Specifically, increased good relations with countries at odds with the United States, such as Syria and Iran, would bolster the reputation of ALBA and cause global powers to take note of ALBA's desires.

In order for ALBA to expand its influence the farthest, and increase its global support, any plan or resolution must take into account both regional and international measures. As an

organization founded under the principles of Simón Bolívar, ALBA aims to unify as much of South America as feasibly possible under ALBA's common ideals. This goal cannot be done without international support. A strong resolution should include programs and policies designed to bolster regional support for ALBA, attract new members or strategic allies and general international support including diplomatic friendships and traditional forms of political, economic, or social aid.

Questions to Consider

01. What are new ways in which ALBA can spread its socialist influence around South America?
02. How should ALBA approach other regional countries who don't agree with their politics?
03. What programs or policies can be put in place to promote unified socialist ideals spanning all ALBA member states?
04. How can the organization gain regional and international power while staying true to their Bolivarian values and ideals?
05. In what ways can TeleSUR be changed to make it more adaptable to modern times?
06. In what ways can TeleSUR be changed or replaced to increase their reputation among the International Community as a legitimate news source?
07. How can ALBA use the media, or technology to spread their influence, raise their reputation, or increase their power?
08. How can ALBA find new like-minded countries to aid them in their opposition to capitalism, and western institutions?
09. How can ALBA use the relationships they have established with foreign countries to their benefit in trying to advance their goals?

Continued Research

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP)

<http://www.sela.org/media/2087752/di-11-alba-tcp-ing.pdf>

This study summarizes the structure of ALBA and examines the effectiveness of ALBA's past actions. The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) sponsored this study in order to evaluate ALBA's attempts to integrate South America. SELA is an intergovernmental regional organization which seeks to further the integration and cooperation of Latin American and Caribbean nations. Keep in mind that SELA's goals align closely with ALBA's own mission of a unified South America.

A Guide to ALBA

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/hirst/article>

In the article "A Guide to ALBA," Joel D. Hirst discusses the history, ideals, and notable actions of ALBA. Hirst was an international affairs fellow in residence at the Council on Foreign Relations, a prestigious think tank focusing on international affairs. "A Guide to ALBA" was published in the Americas Quarterly which is the "leading publication dedicated to politics, business and culture in [Latin] America" according to its website.

ALBA: Creating a Regional Alternative to Neo-liberalism

<https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/3154>

Shawn Hattingh applauds ALBA's opposition to the United States and outlines ALBA's major accomplishments for the betterment of Latin America. This article also displays a marked bias towards ALBA due to the fact the publisher of the article is Venezuelan. Further, Venezuela Analysis describes its mission as "provid[ing] a counter-narrative to mainstream media ... based on the perspective of the leftist and grassroots movements in Venezuela" which mirrors ALBA's own goals.

The Legacy of Post-Neoliberal Integration in South America: The Cases of ALBA and UNASUR

<https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip1820.pdf>

In this research paper, Nicolo Bilotta compares the histories, actions and motives of UNASUR and ALBA in order to analyze the rise and future of Latin American socialism and integration. Bilotta has worked as a researcher, writer and is currently an analyst at the Financial Times. The publisher of this research is the Istituto Affari Internazionali which is an Italian think tank which features research on international politics and multilateral cooperation.

TeleSUR's official website (English)

<https://www.telesurenglish.net/>

TeleSUR is a news network sponsored and funded by the Venezuelan government. Through the English version of their website, readers can view the news through the lens of South America. However, teleSUR has

also received accusations of being "teleChávez" due to its near propagandic bias towards the ideals of ALBA.

Venezuela's Telesur Cable News Network

<https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=4782275>

John Dinges, in his interview by Neal Conan on National Public Radio, explains the possible benefits teleSUR could bring to the people of Latin America. John Dinges is a professor of Journalism at Columbia University who has served many years as a correspondent for NPR and published multiple books regarding Latin America.

THE BOOM IN COUNTER-HEGEMONIC NEWS CHANNELS: A case study of Telesur

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%20520Boom%2520in%2520Counter-Hegemonic%2520News%2520Channels%2520-%2520A%2520case%2520study%2520of%2520Telesur.pdf>

In this comprehensive study of teleSUR, James Painter examines the origins of teleSUR and the extent of its bias in regards to ALBA's missions and in teleSUR's coverage of Venezuela. Painter is a Research Associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford, author of several books relating to Latin America, and former journalist for the BBC World Service.

The Bolivarian crisis: Is Latin

America's "pink tide" receding?

<https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/the-bolivarian-crisis-is-latin-america-s-pink-tide-receding/>

Emile Schepers explains the causes for the rise of Bolivarianism in Latin America and the current decrease in favor of right-wing politicians. Schepers further calls for the citizens and government of the United States to change their policies regarding the leadership of South America. Schepers is an immigrants rights activist and member of the Communist Party USA who received his doctorate degree in cultural anthropology from Northwestern University. The publisher of this article, People's World, is an online news publication widely considered both Marxist and leftist.

Latin America's Go-To Hero

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/18/opinion/arana-latin-americas-go-to-hero.html>

In "Latin America's Go-To Hero," Marie Arana explores the influence of Simón Bolívar on recent South American leaders. According to her biography, Marie Arana is a "journalist, novelist and adviser to the librarian of Congress." The New York Times is a reputable American newspaper which has been in circulation since 1851.

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